Statement

As the primary United Nations representative of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, and most recently the focal point of the Mountain Partnership at Utah Valley University in the Rocky Mountains, I wish to state that no one should be left behind in our SDG planning — especially mountain people. These women, men and children are among the world's poorest and should be at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The mountain communities in the Rocky Mountains and other mountainous areas emphasize that we must reach the most remote, marginalized communities, especially those at higher elevations. On their behalf we must address poverty and hunger eradication; gender equality; decent work opportunities and economic growth; industry and infrastructure; and sustainable communities.

Because 39 percent of mountain dwellers in developing countries are vulnerable to food insecurity, the efforts toward Zero Hunger, good health and well-being, as well as quality education must be focused on people in these regions. Mountain areas are particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters, as we know from our own experiences in Utah and the Rocky Mountains. The mountains should be a global priority given the multitude of resources they provide.

My colleagues in Utah and I, including many dedicated students, were able to contribute to the campaign of the Mountain Partnership to include mountain targets among the SDGs during 2013-2015 and we are grateful to the United Nations for including three mountain targets among those SDGs.

Now, efforts must be made to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals in the mountains, not just the three targets that specifically mention them in Goals 6 and 15.